Planning for integration as a two way process: Perceptions from Toronto
Donya Ahmadi
Tuna Tasan-Kok

ABSTRACT

Integration has evolved as a well-embraced discourse within theory and policy debates concerning the accommodation of newcomers. However, in today's increasingly cosmopolitan cities of Europe planning for integration fails to properly address increasing diversity as it is often grounded in pre-conceived assumptions of traditional nation-state ideology around social and cultural homogeneity. Primarily focusing on policy measures like integration courses, compulsory language courses, citizenship exams, etc., the traditional approach imposes values of the 'host country' upon newcomers along with a strong national identity without considering positive aspects of their transnationality, and chance of mutual exchange between diverse individuals and communities. Such policies promote a deficit-based approach towards diversity through which perceptions of 'otherness', and 'insider versus outsider' mechanisms are perpetuated. Planning, as a policy field that deals with spatial organization, social justice and economic redistribution in cities, has a very little attempt to directly involve in the integration debate. Although the practice of planning has a lot to do with creating and sustaining the integration in neighborhoods and cities through social cohesion, the standard approach in planning for integration related matters is to provide social, spatial and economic infrastructure for the newcomers to blend into the surrounding society. In this approach, background of an individual is seen as a primary reason of failure or success, ignoring the multiple and constant interconnections across international borders. The present study argues that integration cannot be used as a one-type-fits-all model for dealing with diversity in today’s cosmopolitan cities where identities are more fluid, relational, and global in nature than collectively defined citizenship refers (Isin, 2000) and ‘difference is a daily reality’ (Bridge, 2005). Moreover, we argue, planning theory and practice should develop a comprehensive understanding of integration as part of spatial policy making in cosmopolitan cities.

Thus, first of all integration should included and elaborated in planning theory as an important field dealing with social cohesion, and, while doing that, new approaches in urban planning and policy making are needed to respect different identities without eliminating differences between groups. The Toronto case shows that integration is directly included in the planning debate and in practice planning responds to the dynamic identities and cosmopolitan processes by redefining integration as a two way process. Based on semi-structured interviews with a range of actors involved in diversity-related urban policy-making (i.e. public officials, policy-makers and strategists at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, and non-profit organizations), and critical discourse analysis of city-wide documents, policy statements, and policy records, our findings demonstrate how integration can be included in urban planning and how the development and consolidation of more mutual and
less assimilationist conceptions of integration within planning help improve diversity policy towards a more inclusive approach.

**Key words:** Urban Planning, Urban Diversity, Integration

**Introduction**

Difference has increasingly come to be seen as a daily reality in the contemporary city and a sustained feature of urban space. Cities are sites wherein social differences gather together at various scales and levels of intensity (Fincher and Jacobs, 1998). In the context of today’s increasing and complexifying urban diversity, it is important to rethink the theoretical framework within which planning operates in line with a broader understanding of diversity as well as recognition of the ‘right to difference’. Theory and practice of planning thus needs to acknowledge, respect and integrate difference. *Integrating difference*, meaning the process whereby difference ceases to be problematic (Modood, 2013), can be achieved through adopting less assimilationist approaches within policy making which reflect a mutual or two-way understanding of integration, which can be a useful framework for urban planning. We mean by two-way understanding of integration as. The article sets out to answer the following primary research questions: *How is integration perceived in current planning and policy practice? How can integration as a two way policy be operationalised by planning processes? What can planning theory learn from the practice of integration to develop new inclusive approaches?*

Planning for integration becomes relevant when a society is faced by minority groups or individuals who are perceived as ‘different’ in a negative way and are thereby stigmatized as outsiders and treated unfavorably by standard members (Modood, 2013). Policy can also feed into the marginalization of minorities by reinforcing the values and norms of the established society in plans, legislation, and urban planning practices (Sandercock, 2000). We begin by addressing how the issue of difference is addressed by planning theory, asking how diversity and difference challenges traditional planning approaches and how integration policies can respond to these challenges. Later the perceptions of integration in planning and policy practices in Toronto are revealed. In the final section we make explicit what lessons are to be learned from dominant discourses in Toronto in order to revisit theory concerning planning for integration.

**Planning for difference, Cultural Dialouge, Intersectionality, Integration: a literature review**

In the field of urban diversity and planning, there has been considerable academic endeavor on the existence of difference in the city and how planning is influenced by it. Sandercock (1997) argues that three socio-cultural forces, namely transnational migrations, post-colonialism, and the rise of civil society have placed the concept of difference on the agenda of urban planning. The acknowledgement that various populations groups have different claims on the city for a fulfilling life has resulted in the creation of a ‘politics of difference’
(Sandercock, 1997) or a ‘politics of cultural recognition’ (Tully, 1995). This consists in the conciliation of the claims of various groups for recognition and accommodation of their cultural differences (ibid). For Amin (2002), however, the question of how to plan for diversity is not to be answered by focusing on recognition of cultural differences and on national rights regarding race and citizenship, rather by understanding everyday lived experiences and local negotiations of difference. He thus recognizes everyday enactment as the central site of identity formation and argues that it is at the local level where “abstract rights and obligations, together with local structures and resources, meaningfully interact with distinctive individual and inter-personal experiences” (11).

- Cultural dialogue
  (Amin, 2002: 967)
- Intercultural stresses the cultural dialogue, to contrast with versions of multiculturalism that either stress cultural difference without resolving the problem of communication between cultures, or versions of cosmopolitanism that speculate on the gradual erosion of cultural difference through interethnic mixture and hybridisation.

Understanding the complexity of intertwined identities in a complex urban society (Anthias, 2002).

- Intersectionality deals with heterogeneity and inclusion by considering the ‘complex nature of belonging and social hierarchy’ (Anthias, 2013).
- Intersectionality tries to catch the relationships between socio-cultural categories and identities, and analyses how these categories intertwine (Knudsen, 2005).
- Intersectionality comprehends social diversity by looking at positions and locations of diverse groups who crosscut ethnic boundaries with dialogue and negotiation (Anthias, 2013).
- Intersectionality is a useful term in relation to the hyper-diversity approach and quite close to what we want to underline by it, as it refuses to locate identities in terms of one parameter of difference and identity, but requires considering class and gender processes and those of other social categories and divisions such as sexuality, age and disability (Anthias, 2013).
- Integration (modood) and his model. Limitations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assimilation</th>
<th>Individualist-Integration</th>
<th>Cosmopolitanism</th>
<th>Multiculturalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationale</strong></td>
<td>Minorities must be encouraged to conform to the dominant cultural pattern.</td>
<td>Minorities are free to assimilate or cultivate their identities in private but are discouraged from thinking of themselves</td>
<td>Neither minority nor majority individuals should think of themselves as belonging to a single identity but be free</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
as minority, but rather as individuals to mix and match their own choice.

**Table 1: Four modes of integration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Participation** | Civic engagement  
Community participation  
Place attachment  
Intercultural contact | Civic engagement  
Community Participation  
Place attachment  
Intercultural contact  
Empowerment  
Community Capacity  
Building settlement  
Intercultural contact |
| **Access** | Health  
Access to employment  
Access to services  
Access to information | Health  
Access to employment  
Access to affordable housing  
Equitable access |
| **Space** | Sense of belonging  
Economic and labour integration | Sense of belonging  
Sense of community |
| **Equity** | Equality of opportunities  
Rights (in the legal sense) | Equality of opportunities  
Inclusion  
Cohesion  
Respect |

**Methods**

Qualitative interviews were held with 8 governmental and 28 non-governmental policy actors in Toronto respectively on their perceptions of integration. A total of 21 policy documents have been additionally analysed. We both look at governmental and non-governmental interpretations of integration. Critical discourse analysis was used to analyse the data.

**Integration in Toronto**

“Assimilation is about ‘leave your baggage at the door’. We [in Toronto] are our baggage. That is who we are! And how do you integrate baggage or everything we bring to life from the other places in the world that we have come from? And given that the world is now on the move, every year there are more people leaving their home country, looking for something better, how do you deal with the fact that diversity now is all about different types of baggage?” [Interview on 29 October 2013]

**Conclusions and discussion**

The primary themes in integration policies in Toronto are:
- Participation, Access, Equity, Space
- Integration is not assimilation
- Integration is a two way process.
- No stand-alone integration policy in Toronto

Thus, in the policy context of Toronto integration does not only address newcomers, rather all ‘marginalized groups’ in society. The terms inclusion and settlement are used as opposed to integration and broad understanding of diversity in Toronto reflects the intersectionality concept. Linking findings to planning we can see the following implications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons from Toronto</th>
<th>Implications for planning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration is a two way process</td>
<td>Planning for non-assimilationist and non-conformative integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The important role of community: much of the negotiation of difference happens at the local (community) level</td>
<td>Fine-tuned and top-down prescriptions to plan for integration and harmony will not work. <em>We need bottom-up approaches!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space matters!</td>
<td>Creating micro-publics of intersectional connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad understanding of diversity</td>
<td>Planning for integration should not only target newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing equitable access to services is a core objective of integration</td>
<td>The importance of moving away from the <em>individualization of responsibility</em> discourse</td>
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References


